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ABSTRACT

An analysis is made of the Federal Merit Program, with emphasis on its applicability at Department of Commerce, and suggestions to session leader for discussion of problem areas are given. A series of graphics further illustrates the program. Handouts include a Merit Promotion Questionnaire, an article on the program's history and a Merit Promotion Interest Statement form for Department of Commerce employees. (NF)

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM NO. II-4-10

COMMERCE SUPERVISORY COURSE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL

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ABOUT THE DISCUSSION GUIDES

The study of supervisory processes and practices has been going on for many, many years, and practical knowledge of experience based supervisory activities continues to increase. These discussion guides provide ideas, concepts, and approaches to the supervisory function that capture the experience of successful supervisors in the Federal Government.

These guides, covering the major processes of the Government supervisor, are in response to the need for basic supervisory training materials that can be used in the instruction and training of supervisors throughout the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Each discussion guide may be used separately or in concert with other guides. Latitude is provided in the design to tailor the subject matter to the needs of the respective bureaus of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

These guides were developed by a Task Force composed of representatives of the various Bureaus of the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Office of the Secretary. Their background and experience reflects a variety of professional and technical specialties within the Department.

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The discussion guide on the subject of The Merit Promotion Program was the task assignment of Karl E. Bell, National Bureau of Standards.

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U.S. Department of Commerce

COMMERCE SUPERVISORY COURSE

SESSION II-4-10
MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Commerce Supervisory Course

SESSION II-4-10

MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of this session is to develop a basic understanding of the Federal Merit Program, its applicability at the Department of Commerce, and more important, to assist supervisors to develop support for the program and thus aid in its application and implementation.

SUGGESTIONS TO SESSION LEADER

Discussion leader should emphasize importance of support by supervisors to the effectiveness of the Merit Promotion Program. Problem areas for special consideration by the discussion leader are:

1. Employees may see system as threatening to own jobs and careers due to increased competition for vacancies;

2. Supervisors may view the system as diminishing their authority to select and retain subordinates; and

3. Supervisors may fear that appraisals and selections under the program may not be impartial or objective.

SUBJECT: MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM SESSION: II-4-10

	DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT II-4-10-H1
QUESTIONNAIRE ON MERIT PROGRAM	Questionnaire will have two main objectives: 1. To rid supervisors of a lot of emotionalism, and 2. Will provide discussion leader with a good indication of how much is known about the program and hence clue him to need for detailed discussion.
SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G1	(Discuss each question briefly with class.)
	DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT II-4-10-H2
ARTICLE "SECOND TIME AROUND"	This article by the Executive Director of the U.S. Civil Service Commission recognizes the fact that the plan instituted in 1959 has failed more than it has succeeded. Hence the committment to try again. What are some of the reasons for the failure of past plans? Possible responses are as follows:
PAST PLANS FAILED BECAUSE --	1. Lack of communication, 2. Inappropriate evaluation methods used, 3. Preselection, and 4. Competitive promotion procedures were not used. (Discussion leader should record responses on blackboard for future reference.)
NEED FOR MERIT PROGRAM	Why does the U. S. Government need a merit program? Responses: 1. To provide an orderly systematic method of considering employees for advancement opportunities; 2. To provide every employee with a reasonable number of advancement opportunities; and

	3. To provide a mechanism to fill each vacancy with candidates of highest qualifications.
INVITE DISCUSSION BE SURE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED ARE RELEVANT	Before discussing the merit principle and the Federal Merit Promotion Program, one needs to find out what is the true role of a supervisor in his work group. Instructor should ask the question: "On what basis is a supervisor ultimately judged?" Instructor should elicit the response: "His ability to get the job done."
MEANS OF FILLING A JOB	Supervisors often have to decide on whether to fill a job by promoting someone from within or bring in a person from outside via promotion, transfer, reassignment, reinstatement or a new appointment from the Civil Service Register. Handout should provide some discussion concerning the role of the supervisor and the disappointments which the decisions bring in his work group.
WAYS NOT TO FILL A JOB	To be able to do this, the supervisor needs the most capable staff he can find. This will not be done by selecting friends, cronies, associates, etc., when vacancies exist. He needs to pursue every available avenue, look within staff, and even outside the organization to find the best qualified person for the job. Only then will he be assuring himself that he is finding the best qualified staff to do the job. This is the basis of the merit principle. Supervisors need it, employees need it, and the Federal Civil Service needs it.
MECHANICS OF MERIT PLANNING	Briefly this is how it works: 1. Supervisors prepare a description of vacancies; 2. The Personnel Office posts vacancies and reviews files to locate candidates; 3. Employees apply or are identified as candidates from Personnel files. Then what?

ROLE OF PERSONNEL OFFICE	4. The Personnel Office a. Determines eligibility, b. Notifies all applicants of such determinations, c. Evaluates candidates, d. Certifies best qualified candidates to supervisor.
ROLE OF SUPERVISOR	5. The supervisor then a. Reviews candidates certified to him, b. Conducts interviews, c. Makes his selection.
A MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE	6. All candidates are notified of supervisor's decision.
PROVISIONS OF EVERY MERIT PROMOTION PLAN	The Merit Promotion Plan is applicable to all positions in the competitive Civil Service. DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT II-4-10-H3
POSITIONS COVERED BY PLAN	Also covered under the plan are the following actions: 1. Selection by tranfer or reinstatement to a higher grade position than the candidates last position; 2. Selection for reassignment, transfer, or reinstatement to a position with known promotion potential; 3. Selection of a non-temporary Federal employee from a civil service register for appointment to a higher grade position or a position with known promotion potential; 4. Selection for detail of more than 60 days to a higher grade position or a position with known promotion potential; and 5. Selection of an employee for training which is required for advancement.

POSITION EXEMPTED FROM MERIT PROGRAM	A career promotion is exempted from the Merit Promotion Program if: 1. Adequate competition was held at an earlier stage (e.g. apprentice positions, trainee positions, understudy positions, and positions filled at a grade level below the established or anticipated grade; 2. If the employee was selected from a civil service register or by competitive promotion procedures and the fact that the initial selection could lead to promotion was made known to all potential candidates; 3. If the employee is under a formal training or executive development agreement; or 4. If the employee's position is reconstituted in a higher grade because of the accretion of additional duties and responsibilities (if they were not the result of planned management action).
POSITIONS OR ACTIONS NOT COVERED BY MERIT PROGRAM	Other actions to which the plan is not applicable: 1. Correction of a classification error or application of a new standard issuance; 2. Repromotion if demoted without personal cause originally; 3. Increase in pay associated with RIF influenced assignment; 4. Temporary promotion of less than 120 days; and 5. After failure to provide an employee proper merit promotion consideration. SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G2
FEATURES OF NEW MERIT PROGRAM	We have admitted that formal merit programs were inadequate and not very effective. The new program has the above new features Instructor should allot 15 minutes for questions about features of the new program

SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G3

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

The reasons for supervisors to be acquainted with all that detail is evident in the graphic. The supervisor is perhaps the most important person to make the Merit Program work.

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT II-4-10-H4

NEW MERIT FORMS ARE COMPLICATED

SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G4

Allot 10 minutes for scanning material. In order to familiarize supervisors with new forms, a class should be instructed to complete evaluation Form CD-261 (Evaluation of Candidate's Qualifications.)

DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT II-4-10-H5

BRIEFING OUTLINE

When you return to your office after this course, the Handout will serve as a Briefing Outline for your discussions with your subordinates.

SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G5

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

The Department of Commerce Administrative Order outlines the Department of Commerce policies. Each bureau uses this as a model. Changes can be made to meet each bureau's individual needs. The second handout tells about the Civil Service plan for implementing the program.

ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

POINTS COVERED ARE REVIEW ITEMS

1. Are the positions covered specified?
2. Are there separate provisions for supervisory positions.
3. Is the minimum area of consideration specified?
4. Does the plan provide for considering agency employees outside the minimum area of consideration?
5. Does the plan state how the area of consideration will be expanded?
6. Does the plan indicate the methods which will be used to locate candidates?

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ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS	7. Does the plan require that for employees to be initially assigned to any of the GS positions listed in X-118, part II, section IV, they must have first passed any written tests required by Commission standards? 8. Is there a procedure for identifying the necessary number of best qualified candidates? Are the ranking criteria specified? 9. Is there a requirement that if at least three highly qualified candidates can not be certified for a vacancy that the area of consideration will be systematically enlarged? 10. Do procedures insure that an employee selected for promotion is released promptly from his present position?
REFERENCES	SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G6 Discuss where these issuances may be obtained. SHOW GRAPHIC II-4-10-G7

SUMMARY

MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

CONCLUSION

Getting the work done is the most important role of a supervisor. He can do this by acquiring a competent staff. The way to do this is to be fair, equitable and open minded. This is what the program is about.

The Merit Promotion Program will work best if there is confidence in it by employees and supervisors. Supervisors want to be sure their hands are not "tied" in making selections. Employees want to be sure that relevant information provided on evaluation forms will ultimately lead to objective selections.

This new merit program is no panacea. As was the case in the past, ways will be found to prevent the program. However, this is an improvement with a thorough understanding of the Merit Principle, a giant step can be taken to make the program.

10-G1

U.S. Department of Commerce

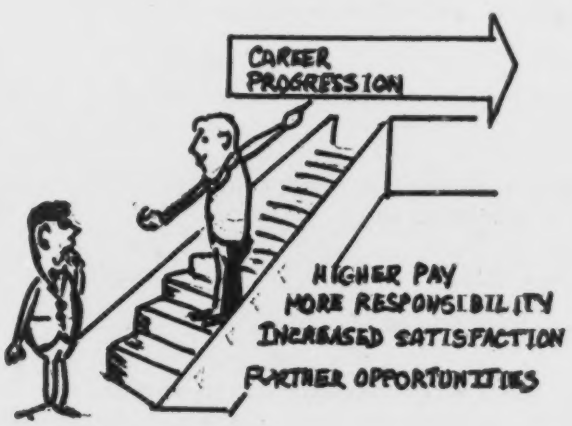
COMMERCE SUPERVISORY COURSE

SESSION II-4-10
MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

GRAPHICS

GRAPHICS-II-4-10-G1

THE
FEDERAL
MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM



WHAT IT IS!

HOW IT WORKS!

DOES IT WORK?

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G2

SOME FEATURES TO ASSURE APPROPRIATE AND FAIR CONSIDERATION FOR EMPLOYEES

Promotion Actions

- Areas of consideration that are broad enough to provide attractive career opportunities
- Submission of voluntary applications outside own minimum area of consideration
- Basic eligibility if meet Commission established qualification standards
- Fair rating methods (for example, restrictions on use of written tests)
- Added requirements to assure that there is no form of personal favoritism or discrimination
- More detailed records

Promotion Procedures

- Application of competitive promotion procedures to certain reassignments, transfers, reinstatements, and appointments of Federal employees from registers
- Application of competitive promotion procedures to details over 60 days
- Stronger requirements for special consideration for repromotion following demotion without personal cause

Role of Employees

- Participation in the development of and significant revision to promotion guidelines and plans
- Entitlement to periodic information about agency's promotion program and own promotion opportunities and to specified information about individual promotion actions
- Processing of all promotion complaints under applicable grievance procedures

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G3

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY

1. ANTICIPATED PERSONNEL NEEDS

   Initiate action well in advance so sufficient time can be given

2. ENSURE AGAINST PRESELECTION

   Avoid interviews and other related activities before vacancy has been advertised

3. PROMOTION PANELS

   Supervisors may be requested to serve on panels

4. JOB QUALIFICATIONS

   Include only job requirements essential to successful job performance

5. CANDIDATE SELECTION

   Make final selection of candidates recommended by personnel office

   Discuss promotion consideration with candidates not selected

6. COMMUNICATION

   Inform subordinates concerning details of merit promotion program

7. EMPLOYEE APPRAISALS

   Complete employee appraisals and evaluations

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G4

Issue Date: Closing Date:

Merit Promotion Program Announcement Number:

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

TITLE, SERIES & GRADE: **VACANCY LOCATION:**

AREA OF CONSIDERATION:

DUTIES, QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTIVE PLACEMENT FACTORS (IF ANY):

FACTORS WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERED IN EVALUATING QUALIFIED CANDIDATES:

HOW TO APPLY: **ANY EMPLOYEE OF COMMERCE may apply for this vacancy regardless of the area of consideration. Submit a completed Merit Promotion Interest Statement, Form CD 261. (A completed SF 171, Personal Qualifications Statement, should also be submitted if the personnel office below is not the one which maintains your Official Personnel Folder. See Instructions on Form CD 261).**
APPLICANTS NOT EMPLOYED BY COMMERCE must submit only a completed Standard Form 171, Personal Qualifications Statement.

WHERE TO APPLY: **By the indicated closing date, completed form(s) must be sent to:**

NOTE: The U.S. Department of Commerce is an equal opportunity employer. Vacancies are filled in accordance with non-discrimination policies of the U.S. Government.

Form CD-260 (2-11-69)
Prescribed by A.O. 202-335

See reverse side for additional information, if any.

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G5

MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

1. AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

   3 highly qualified employees must be located in the agency, The Department of Commerce in the local area and finally on a commerce-wide basis

2. VACANCY POSTING TIME

   Local area—5 days

   Commerce wide area—10 days

   World wide area—15 days

3. SUPERVISORY POSITIONS

   All supervisors must receive 80 hours training in supervision

4. VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

   All evaluation factors must be stated in announcement

   Candidates must know evaluation criteria and weight of factors

   Minimum factors are supervisory evaluations, experience, awards, training and tests

5. OUTSIDE CANDIDATES

   Must clearly be best candidate to be selected

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G6

CHECKLIST OF ISSUANCES

FPM Chapter 335, Promotion and Internal Placement (Sept. 20, 1968)

Bulletin No. 335-8, Changes in Merit Promotion Policies (Aug. 27, 1968)

Bulletin No. 335-9, Procedure for Requesting Commission Approval of Written Test Use (Sept. 27, 1968)

Qualification Standards for Supervisory Positions in GS Occupations (Advance copy to agency headquarters Nov. 12, 1968. Final copy in Nov. 1968 transmittal sheet for Handbook X-118.)

Appendix A (Supervisory Training), FPM Chapter 410, Training (Being prepared)

Guide to Evaluation of Employees for Promotion (Appendix A to Part II of Handbook X-118) (Being revised)

Pamphlet on Building Better Promotion Programs (Personnel Management Series #2) (Being revised)

Federal Employees Facts Leaflet on the Federal Merit Promotion Policy (Being revised)

GRAPHICS II-4-10-G7

GETTING THE WORK DONE

All the things we discuss are aimed at one objective--one that management, regardless of the seeming importance of other issues, is most interested in.

U.S. Department of Commerce

COMMERCE SUPERVISORY COURSE

SESSION II-4-10
MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

HANDOUTS

HANDOUT II-4-10-H1

MERIT PROMOTION QUESTIONNAIRE

(1) Who is primarily responsible for the administration of the Federal Merit Promotion Program?

A. Personnel Office
B. EEO Officer
C. Supervisor
D. Civil Service Commission
E. None of these

(2) Is the plan closely related to these other personnel programs?

	Yes	No	Do not know
Recruiting and Staffing?	☐	☐	☐
Manpower Planning?	☐	☐	☐
Training?	☐	☐	☐
Career Development?	☐	☐	☐
Performance Evaluation?	☐	☐	☐

(3) Which of the following would you consider evaluation criteria to be included in identifying the best qualified candidate?

Interview	Appearance
Job Performance	Ability to get along with others
Race	Time in grade
Other's Opinion	Age
Test Scores	Potential

(4) Would you as a supervisor interview all candidates? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(5) Can all employees receive fair and appropriate considerations for higher level jobs under the program? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(6) Can persons from outside the agency be considered for filling key positions under the plan? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(7) Should a candidate not selected be informed of the status of his application? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(8) Is the Merit Promotion Program a necessary part of the agency's Equal Employment Program? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(9) Are there any promotions exempted from the competitive procedures? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

(10) Is it possible for employees and employee organizations (Unions) to participate in the development and revision of the Promotion Program? Yes ☐ No ☐ Do not know ☐

HANDOUT II-4-10-H2

the SECOND TIME AROUND

By
NICHOLAS J. OGANOVIC
Executive Director
U.S. Civil Service Commission

WE TRIED IN 1959—with some success, some failure—and now we try again. The second time around, with 10 years of experience behind us, and a bright new policy to build on, we're going to see to it that the Federal Merit Promotion system lives up to its promise. This is no idle pledge. It is not a hollow vow. It is a commitment to the 2 million Federal employees who rely on this policy for a fair shake in promotions. Fulfillment of this commitment will depend on the cooperative efforts of the Civil Service Commission, Federal agency managers and supervisors, and Federal employees and their representatives—but most of all on the efforts of agency management.

HOW DID IT START

Back in 1959 the Commission ushered in the Federal Merit Promotion Policy to insure a systematic means of selection for promotion according to merit. The Government-wide policy arose out of a need, recognized by the Commission and by Congressional interests alike, for improvement in the promotion programs of individual Federal agencies.

Improvements came, but not on all fronts. Despite accomplishments, some installations just didn't come up to program goals. The process of evaluating and ranking candidates was in too many cases just a routine exercise, pre-selection was practiced in some instances, supervisory appraisals at times lacked reliability, and written tests were sometimes misused. Understandably, many managers and employees were dissatisfied.

By and large, the single most important cause of dissatisfaction could be summed up in the words "communications gap." A sizable number of Federal workers simply lacked confidence in their agency's promotion program because they weren't properly informed. There was another reason, however, for some of the employee dissatisfaction. For each employee promoted there are a number of others who are understandably disappointed at being passed over. An employee who has lost out in the competition for a promotion may turn his personal disappointment into a gripe with the promotion program itself.

FAIRNESS ABOVE ALL

But the fact remains that even personal disappointment can be neutralized if the employee knows that the man who won out in the promotion hurdles did so fairly . . . that personal favoritism or a loophole in the program did not "do him in." It's in the nature of man to want to *know* that he has been dealt with honorably. What's more, he has a right to know this, and those who administer the promotion program have an obligation to see that he does know.

This obligation has figured largely in everything we have done to shape a new merit promotion policy. The communications gap that put management in one camp and employees in another had to be bridged with a policy strong enough for management to stand on, strong enough to weather any challenges from employees.

And so it was, that in September 1966 a Civil Service Commission task force was formed to consider revisions in the merit promotion policy. After a great deal of study and discussion within the Commission, the task force came up with a discussion paper on possible revisions. In April 1967, agencies and employee organizations got the paper for comment. It was also discussed at a conference of personnel directors.

Comments reflected the widely varying viewpoints on the nature of the merit promotion policy. Basically, agencies felt the need for fewer regulatory controls than were proposed, while employee organizations wanted either tighter regulatory control over agency operations or greater freedom to negotiate controls.

FPM CHAPTER REVISED

Based on the comments received, a comprehensive revision of the Federal Personnel Manual chapter covering promotion and internal placement was drafted. The draft translated policies approved by the Commission into detailed instructions to agencies. The draft chapter was sent for review to representative agencies and employee organizations and to Federal Executive Boards in the Commission's regional office cities.

Reconciling the suggestions was no easy matter as there was still considerable disagreement among the reviewers on many issues. But each and every comment was given careful consideration, and many constructive changes resulted. Then we had it—a final rewrite of the chapter that was next given the stamp of approval by the Civil Service Commissioners. On August 27, 1968, as the culmination of nearly 2 years of work, we announced the revision of the Federal merit promotion policy.

What I want to stress here is that extensive consultation guided all our steps in revising the policy. You may not like everything about it, and employee organizations may have some reservations about certain points. But it's better than anything we've had before. It's a policy we can all live with, and grow on.

IMPORTANT DATES

There are some important dates to keep in mind in connection with the new policy. Not unlike dates in the history books, the significance of these dates is keyed to the events leading up to them, the activity and spirit that mark your efforts before the deadline date. The first stage of implementation—revision of top-level policies and the issuance of governing instructions to installations throughout the country and overseas—must be completed by January 1, 1969.

Deadline for the second stage—revision of *all* specific promotion plans and detailed procedures—is 6 months later to allow time for agencies to make the extensive changes necessary in their present promotion programs and to consult with employee organizations before issuing revised instructions and promotion plans.

As Federal managers besieged by the problems and pressures of today, you may feel the second deadline date is far off. It isn't. The time to start cranking up your administrative machinery, to get your program revamped, is *now*.

You'll have to make many important decisions before you can get started under the new rules. And you still have to meet the real test. The selling job. The communication. The job of telling your employees what the changes mean

to them—in terms of truly open and fair competition for promotions.

As you talk about the new policy and changes in your promotion program, as you tackle this all-important job of communicating, keep in mind how the changes can work for you as well—how they can help you have a top-notch staff backing you up, how they can help to insure continuity of effort by reducing the time a position in your organization is vacant, and how they can help to make your managers and your employees feel better about the effort.

Yes, if you have a finely tooled promotion program going for you—one that puts the accent on promoting the most highly qualified in a way that managers and employees understand—the changes are going to work in your favor, too, because they're *good* changes.

BLEND OF OLD AND NEW

Just what is this new policy you'll be using as the foundation for revising your own promotion policies and procedures? In what ways is it the same, and more importantly, how is it different?

To begin with, we have clarified present policy: That merit *principles* will apply to all promotions in the competitive service, including career promotions and promotions identified as exceptions to competitive promotion procedures. All promotions are subject, without exception, to provisions of the policy governing equal employment opportunity, relationships with employees and employee organizations, and the handling of employee complaints.

AREA OF CONSIDERATION

More attention must be given to the minimum area of consideration in each promotion plan. This is the area in which management makes its initial search for candidates to fill jobs covered by the plan. It may be the entire agency, a bureau, a division, a field installation, or some other reasonable area. What's important is that the minimum area must be broad enough so that you can reasonably expect to locate a good number of highly qualified candidates to fill your vacancies. Emphasis is on the twin objectives of meeting agency needs and affording employees adequate opportunities for advancement. Down with dead ends!

As a general rule, the minimum area of consideration should be broadened at higher grades where the number of eligible candidates decreases. For positions at grade GS–14 and above, eligible candidates throughout the agency will be considered—unless this would produce too many candidates or the nature of the positions makes such broad consideration inappropriate.

Another new feature designed to assure selection of highly qualified employees is that the agency generally must broaden the area of consideration when fewer than three highly qualified candidates are available in that area. For positions at grade GS–6 and below and for most trades and labor jobs, however, any extension geographically may be limited to the wage or commuting area.

Still another important change is that agencies must set up procedures for accepting voluntary applications from employees who are interested in jobs outside their own area of consideration. This innovation will create additional advancement opportunities for underutilized employees, facilitate mobility, and open up broader career opportunities.

LOCATING LIKELY CANDIDATES

Instructions are provided on the use of vacancy announcements, skills files, and supervisory referrals. The key here is that all employees must get full consideration and know that they're getting it. Vacancy announcements don't have to be used, but when they are, they must receive sufficient publicity via posting on bulletin boards, special issuances to employees, etc., so that all qualified employees within the area of consideration have an opportunity to know about the vacancy and apply if they wish.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY

New in the policy is that standards prescribed by the Commission will be considered the minimum qualification standards for promotion, and all who meet these standards will be basically eligible for promotion. Under the old policy, agencies could set basic requirements above Commission standards, which sometimes left employees very confused. Imagine the feelings of an employee who is doing higher level work and has passed a Commission exam for the higher grade, but is told he's not eligible for promotion consideration.

The Commission's standards include any appropriate

selective placement factors that should determine eligibility—provided these factors are *essential,* not merely desirable, in performing successfully in the job. Examples of appropriate selective placement factors are knowledge of a language other than English, and proven ability in a functional area (ability to write, etc.).

EVALUATING ELIGIBLES

It's not enough to be basically eligible for promotion. The cornerstone of merit promotion is the identification of those who are *best* qualified. Here, job-related requirements *above* those set in minimum qualification standards are to be used in differentiating among basically eligible candidates. Supervisory appraisals of performance, formerly not required, must be obtained and used in the evaluation process. To help keep the system open and fair, an employee, upon his request, is entitled to see any supervisory appraisal of past performance used in considering him for promotion.

An agency may use a written test for evaluating eligible candidates, but only if—and this is new—the test is required by the Commission for in-service placement, the test meets guidelines the Commission will issue on how, when, and by whom written tests may be used, or the agency obtains prior approval of the Commission for its use.

Experience pertinent to performance in the position to be filled by promotion continues to be an important evaluation factor, of course. The new policy places emphasis on the need to evaluate the type and quality of the experience, rather than just its length. Therefore, length of service and of experience normally may be used as evaluation criteria only when they are clearly related to quality of performance. They may be used in ranking to resolve "ties" between equally qualified candidates for a promotion.

RANKING AND SELECTION

Generally, promotion certificates should contain the names of three to five highly qualified candidates. Up to ten candidates may be certified if meaningful distinctions cannot be made among a smaller number. When an agency cannot identify highly qualified candidates within the agency, it should seek them outside the agency before certifying names of agency employees to the selecting official. If he's to get his job done, he should have the chance to select from among the very best qualified candidates available.

SUPERVISORY POSITIONS

Because of the importance of supervisory positions, and their unique requirements, special promotion plans or special provisions in regular plans are required for supervisory positions. In identifying and evaluating candidates, an agency must use the supervisory qualification standards published by the Commission, or equivalent agency standards.

Since those selected as first-level supervisors are about to assume a significantly different role in relation to other employees and to higher management, it is essential that they be given an early understanding of their new responsibilities.

Under a new requirement, agencies are to provide all first-level supervisors with supervisory training, either before they assume their new duties or as soon afterward as possible.

There are some situations in which agencies find it helpful to select a group of employees for promotion at one time under competitive procedures, give them all supervisory training, and then, under an equitable plan, promote those who satisfactorily complete the training as vacancies occur. This can still be done under the new policy.

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

Personal favoritism in selecting employees for promotion continues to be prohibited. The new policy emphasizes that agencies must avoid practices that may lead employees to believe that a person was pre-selected for a job—such practices as last-minute additions to promotion certificates, reappraisals of candidates, and unreasonable delays in selection. These practices tend to undermine employee confidence in the promotion system and give rise to complaints, even though the selection was entirely proper.

COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PROCEDURES

In a big change, competitive procedures must be used to fill by transfer, reinstatement, or reassignment a position having known promotion potential, such as a trainee or understudy position. Whenever an actual promotion is involved, competitive procedures must also be applied to candidates being considered for transfer or reinstatement. Previously, there was no requirement for having these candidates compete with agency employees.

An agency may not select a nontemporary Federal employee—either from the agency itself or a different agency—from a civil service register for appointment to a higher grade position, or to a position with known promotion potential, unless he would rank among the best qualified under competitive promotion procedures. This new feature of the policy will put an end to practices that employees have found particularly objectionable, often with good cause.

DETAILS AND TEMPORARY PROMOTIONS

The new policy reflects the Commission's view that agencies should not detail an employee to work temporarily at a higher grade level unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. Normally, except for brief assignments, an employee should be given a temporary promo-

tion instead. A promotion gives better recognition to management needs and, in turn, assures the employee of appropriate compensation for his higher grade work.

Competitive promotion procedures must be used if a temporary promotion will last more than 120 days (formerly a 90-day limit), or if a detail to a higher grade position or one with known promotion potential will last more than 60 days (formerly no requirement for competition on details). Competitive promotion procedures may not be circumvented by a series of short temporary assignments.

REPROMOTION

New emphasis is given to the equities of the employee demoted without personal cause—that is, without misconduct or inefficiency on his part and not at his request. He *must* be considered for repromotion before any other means are used to fill a position. Further, as a matter of policy, he should be repromoted as an exception to competitive promotion procedures if he is well qualified for the job—unless there are persuasive reasons for not doing so.

OTHER FEATURES

The new promotion policy also contains better guidance on obtaining employee views on promotion guidelines and plans, particularly on the scope of consultation or negotiation with employee organizations and on what matters may be considered appropriate for such contact.

Employee complaints about the promotion program or about a promotion action that cannot be resolved informally are to be processed under applicable grievance procedures, including union-negotiated procedures. Mere failure to be selected for promotion when proper promotion procedures are used is not a basis for a formal complaint, however.

Also, promotion records must include enough information and be kept long enough to enable reviewers to assure that all Commission and agency requirements have been met. Agencies must review their promotion programs at least once a year to assure that they continue to be responsive to management and employee needs.

In determining what corrective action is to be taken in case of a promotion violation, agencies and the Commission will consider the equities of all employees involved, as well as the interests of the Government itself. Corrective action may involve the employee who was erroneously promoted, the employee or employees who were not promoted or considered because of the violation, or the officials who caused or sanctioned the violation. It also may involve correction of any program deficiencies.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

This, then, is the new merit promotion policy—adopted only after careful consideration of the views of agencies, employee organizations, and other interested parties. It is a policy with a heart, a forward-looking, fair policy that requires big-A Action of Federal managers in the months to come.

I have spoken of this effort to perfect the merit promotion policy as being the second time around—not because we fell flat on our faces the first time, but because we have a second chance to build on what has been good in the program and to replace what has been less than good. This time we have to make certain that the employees get the word. Acceptance and support of the program your agency devises depend for their very existence on how well employees understand what the program is, why you have it, and what it's going to do for them individually. Not collectively, not in general—but *individually*.

Most anniversaries are a time for reflection, for looking back at beginnings, for taking a justifiable pride in having reached a landmark year. The Federal Merit Promotion Policy came into being on January 1, 1959, and this January 1 marks its 10th year of existence. There is plenty of reason for pride in what's been done in the past 10 years in recognizing merit in promotion actions. Yet there is little time for reflection and a long look back. For January 1, 1969, is also the deadline for agency headquarters to have ready the promotion guidelines they have developed under the new promotion policy.

So, instead of simply observing longevity, the mere march of years, we'll dedicate this anniversary to a new beginning. Happy anniversary . . . now let's get on with the job.

HANDOUT II-4-10-H3

FEATURES OF THE MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM
BACKGROUND

Authority To Make Promotions

- Civil Service Act of 1883 placed responsibility in Civil Service Commission for establishing basic requirements for promotions to all positions in the competitive service

- Commission regulations give Federal agencies authority to make promotions from most types of appointments in the competitive service but only under promotion plans that conform with standards and requirements specified in the Federal Merit Promotion Policy (FPM Chapter 335)

Original Government-wide Merit Promotion Policy

- Went into effect January 1, 1959

- Provided that agencies should adopt systematic procedures to insure that merit principles were observed in making promotions in competitive service

- Required that head of agency develop and publish promotion guidelines and merit promotion plans

- Established general principles and procedures under which agency promotion programs operated

Strengths of Original Policy

- Flexibility provided by system in which agency promotion guidelines and plans implemented basic merit principles established by Commission

- Management officials, employees, and employee organizations involved in development of guidelines and plans

- Employees received greater opportunity to be considered for promotion

- Supervisors received better supply of candidates from which to choose

Weaknesses of Original Policy

- Employees and supervisors had incomplete understanding and appreciation of agency promotion programs

- Inappropriate evaluation methods were used

- Competitive promotion procedures were not used for certain placement actions in which they were needed to assure quality staffing

- Operating practices existed that kept agency programs from being fully responsive to management's needs and tended to undermine employee confidence

II

OBJECTIVES OF THE FEDERAL MERIT PROMOTION POLICY

The Federal Merit Promotion Policy has the objectives of:

- Assuring that agencies are staffed by the best-qualified candidates available
- Assuring that employees have an opportunity to develop and advance to their full potential according to their capabilities

To obtain these objectives, the Federal Merit Promotion Policy is designed:

- To bring to the attention of management on a timely basis highly qualified candidates from whom to choose
- To give employees an opportunity to receive fair and appropriate consideration for higher level jobs
- To assure the maximum utilization of employees
- To provide an incentive for employees to improve their performance and develop their skills, knowledges, and abilities
- To provide attractive career opportunities for employees

Procedures prescribed under the Federal Merit Promotion Policy:

- Are not ends in themselves, but
- Are to help agencies achieve the objectives described above

III

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

Who Is Responsible

- FMPP makes head of agency responsible for establishment and operation of his agency's promotion program
- Promotion program thus a management responsibility

What the Responsibilities Include

- To develop promotion guidelines and plans which carry out basic merit promotion principles and objectives
- To integrate promotion prograr with other personnel programs
- To assure technical competence of staff
- To involve employees and employee organizations
- To involve line and management officials
- To keep employees informed about the promotion program and their promotion opportunities
- To handle promotion complaints properly
- To maintain promotion records
- To review annually the promotion program

SOME FLEXIBILITIES

Promotion Plans
- Number
- Type

Area of Consideration
- Size and nature
- Procedures for accepting voluntary applications from outside area

Method of Locating Eligible Candidates
- Vacancy announcements
- Skills files
- Supervisory referrals

Methods of Evaluation
- Experience
- Training
- Written tests
- Performance tests
- Supervisory appraisals
- Interviews
- Awards
- Education

Method of Ranking
- Category
- Rank order

Means of Filling Job
- Promotion
- Reassignment
- Transfer
- Reinstatement
- Selection from civil service register

Career Promotions
- Employee in position with known promotion potential
- Employee undergoing training or evaluation
- Employee whose position reconstituted in a higher grade

Means of Keeping Employees Informed
- Counseling sessions
- CSC, agency, and installation publications
- Training courses

Means of Considering Promotion Complaints Within Grievance Procedures

HANDOUT 11-h-10-H4

FORM CD-261
(2-11-69)
(PRESCRIBED BY
A.O. 202-335)

MERIT PROMOTION INTEREST STATEMENT
(NOTE: This Form For Use by Commerce Employees Only)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Instructions: Complete items bordered by heavy lines in each section of form print or type. **Be sure to include address on reverse side of this form.** Send form to the personnel office listed on the vacancy announcement. Attach a completed Personal Qualifications Statement, SF-171, if personnel office to which you apply does not maintain your Official Personnel Folder or if the information regarding your qualifications which is in the personnel office is not up to date.

Name *(last, first, middle initial)*	Social Security No.	Vacancy Anne. No.	Date Form Submitted

Your Bureau, Division and Location	SF-171 attached ☐ Yes ☐ No	Office Telephone Number / Signature

FOR PERSONNEL OFFICE USE

☐ Qualified
☐ Highly ☐ Name placed on promotion certificate
☐ Not qualified
☐ Did not meet minimum qualification requirements
☐ Did not meet special qualification requirements
☐ Lacked time in grade
☐ (Other) _____
Name of official who decided above action _____

Selecting Official's Action
☐ Selected ☐ Not Selected ☐ Employee declined

Pers. Rep. initials	Date

Date employee notified of outcome of his consideration

SF-171 Retained ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name *(last, first, middle initial)*	SF-171 attached ☐ Yes ☐ No	Vacancy No., Title and Grade	Date Form Submitted

This is in regard to your consideration for the above vacancy.

☐ As you know, you were recently recommended for consideration for the vacancy under the Merit Promotion Program by:
_____

☐ You were considered for the vacancy as a result of the automatic merit promotion consideration received by employees under an established Skills File system.

☐ You were determined to be qualified for the vacancy.
☐ You were selected for the vacancy.
☐ You were not selected for the vacancy in competition with other candidates.
☐ While qualified for the vacancy, the selecting official did not have the opportunity of considering you since you did not rank high enough among the candidates who competed.

☐ For your information, the following candidate was selected for the vacancy:
_____

☐ You are not qualified for the vacancy because:
☐ minimum qualification requirements not met.
☐ special qualification requirements not met.
☐ time in grade requirements not met.

☐ (Other) _____

☐ Your Personal Qualifications Statement, SF-171, is:
☐ Attached for your future use.
☐ Being retained so that you may be considered for other vacancies as they occur. You will be contacted only if something positive develops.

Personnel Office	Name of Personnel Representative	Telephone Number	Date

Name *(last, first, middle initial)*	SF-171 attached ☐ Yes ☐ No	Vacancy No., Title and Grade	Date Form Submitted

This is in regard to your consideration for the above vacancy.

☐ You were recommended for consideration for the vacancy under the Merit Promotion Program by:
_____

☐ You are being considered for the vacancy as a result of the automatic merit promotion consideration received by employees under an established Skills File system.

☐ Your interest in being considered for the vacancy is acknowledged.

☐ You will be advised of the outcome of your consideration soon.

☐ A review of your application/Official Personnel Folder indicates that you are not qualified for the vacancy so you may not be considered.

☐ You are not qualified for the vacancy because:
☐ minimum qualification requirements not met.
☐ special qualification requirements not met.
☐ time in grade requirement not met

☐ (Other) _____

☐ Your Personal Qualifications Statement, SF-171, is:
☐ Attached for your future use.
☐ Being retained so that you may be considered for other vacancies as they occur. You will be contacted only if something positive develops.

Personnel Office	Name of Personnel Representative	Telephone Number	Date

APPLICANT: Be sure to Complete Reverse

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE'S QUALIFICATIONS

(This form is used in the evaluation of a candidate's qualifications for promotion or employment in the Department of Commerce)

BUREAU OR OFFICE	DUTY STATION	DATE FORM ISSUED

CANDIDATE'S NAME	SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	POSITION FOR WHICH CONSIDERED *(Complete only if appropriate)*

In what capacity have you known the candidate? *(Please check appropriately)*

☐ Immediate supervisor ☐ Supervisor above immediate level

☐ Other:

☐ Relative ☐ Co-worker ☐ Instructor ☐ Socially ☐ Other *(Specify)* _____

How long have you been acquainted with candidate? From *(Date)* _____ To *(Date)* _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete all items. **RATING SCALE** - Please describe the applicant on each of the factors by placing a check (√) in the appropriate columns 1-8. The rating scale provides for rating the candidate on each trait as "Below Average," "Adequate," "Strong," or "Excellent." Each category is divided into two parts to enable you to make finer distinctions. Place a check at the position along the scale which best represents the degree to which the employee has demonstrated the trait being rated.

Section A. GENERAL EVALUATION		Rating Scale								
		Below average		Adequate		Strong		Excellent		Don't know
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
AWARENESS	Understanding of agency organization, policy, procedures and objectives.									
RESOURCEFULNESS	Skill, intuition, and flexibility with which he tackles his work.									
ENTHUSIASM	Eagerness with which he approaches all aspects of his work.									
JUDGMENT	Is he usually right or usually wrong; independence; can the supervisor trust his judgment?									
RELATIONSHIPS	Cooperativeness, tact, respect, consideration for others, effectiveness in dealing with others.									
COMPETENCE	Knowledge, skills, and abilities in his field.									
ORGANIZATION	Ability to make good use of time, foresee deadlines, arrange priorities, plan, schedule, etc.									
PRODUCTION	The quantity of work; promptness and efficiency with which he completes assignments.									
QUALITY OF COMPLETED WORK	Ability to produce finished work which is immaculate, consistent with established style and free of errors; attention to detail, following detailed instructions.									
ORAL EXPRESSION	Completeness, accuracy, logic, organization, and brevity of his oral expression, in meetings, phone conversations, etc.									
WRITTEN EXPRESSION	Completeness, accuracy, logic, organization and brevity of his writing.									
ADAPTABILITY	Ability to accept and adapt to change and innovation; to be objective in his evaluation of new ideas, procedures, etc.									
CREATIVITY	Ability to produce ideas from unstructured assignment; to be innovative; to offer new approaches, new ideas.									
ANALYTICAL CAPACITY	Ability to analyze complex problems and come up with systematic and practical approaches to their solution.									
GROWTH	Reads in his field, furthers his education, participates in conferences and in vocational organizations, keeps abreast of new developments.									
CLERICAL TECHNIQUES	Ability to perform with speed and accuracy such clerical techniques as coding, computing, posting and filing, etc.									

Section A. GENERAL EVALUATION - Continued		Rating Scale: Below average (1, 2)	Adequate (3, 4)	Strong (5, 6)	Excellent (7, 8)	Don't know
SKILLS	Ability to perform with speed and accuracy: typing					
	stenography					
	operating office machines such as calculators, adding machines, etc.					
ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP	Ability to analyze and evaluate the efficiency of operating procedures and special procedures; effectiveness in devising procedures. Ability to gain and hold the respect of subordinates and others in the organization.					
PLANNING	Ability to discriminate between important matters and minor details; to foresee the implications of a course of action; to keep work on schedule.					
DELEGATING	Ability to secure the cooperation of, and to stimulate effective work from subordinates; to effectively prevent decrease in production.					
TRAINING	The degree to which he is familiar with available training; ability to recognize and provide the training needed by his subordinates; to develop the potential in subordinates.					
EVALUATING	The degree to which he keeps or could keep subordinates informed as to how they are performing; ability to accurately judge the performance of subordinates.					

Section B. COMMENTS

1. Check the one which applies:

☐ No question as to attendance or use of leave

☐ Question as to attendance or use of leave *(Please explain)*

2. Please comment on any aspect of the candidate's past performance that has not been fully covered in the above items.

Signature of evaluator	Title	Date

Organization and address	Telephone number

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BUREAU OR OFFICE	DUTY STATION	DATE FORM ISSUED

CANDIDATE'S NAME	SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	POSITION FOR WHICH CONSIDERED

INSTRUCTIONS: The following information is essential in the consideration of the candidate. It would be appreciated if you would complete the questions to the best of your knowledge. All information will be treated as confidential.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS: *(Please check appropriately)*	Below average	Adequate	Strong	Excellent	No opinion
Courteous and cooperative					
Presents good appearance					
Honest, trustworthy and dependable					
Emotionally stable					
Tactful with ability to avoid conflict					
Responsible attitude toward discharge of just debts					

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: *(Please check box which is most appropriate)*

Candidate appears to be: ☐ Strong and vigorous ☐ Of average vitality ☐ In poor health

To your knowledge, is there any medical condition (physical or mental) which might affect the candidate's ability to perform his duties in a completely satisfactory manner? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(If "Yes," please explain)

LOYALTY AND INTEGRITY *(Please check appropriate box. If your answer is "Yes" to any of the following questions, please give details below)**

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Do you have any reason to question this person's loyalty to the United States?			Has this person, to your knowledge, ever resigned or been discharged or requested to resign from any position after being told his conduct or work was not satisfactory? *(If "Yes," please provide name and address of employer, along with reasons)*		
Do you have any reason to believe this person belongs, or has belonged, to any Communist or Fascist Organization or to any organization which advocates overthrowing or altering our Constitutional form of Government by force or other illegal means?			Do you have any knowledge of any behavior, activities, or associations which tend to show that this person is not reliable, honest, trustworthy, and of good conduct and character?		
To your knowledge does this person associate, or has he associated, with any person whose loyalty to the United States is questionable or who belongs to any organization of the type described above?			To your knowledge, does this person tend to overindulge in alcholic beverages?		
			Has this person ever been arrested, indicted or convicted in any criminal action?		
Do you have any information indicating that this person's employment would be against the interests of the national security?					
			Has it ever been necessary to enforce disciplinary action against this person?		

*Please state here the details of any "Yes" answer and any additional information concerning the ability and personal characteristics of the candidate which will be of assistance in evaluating the candidate's qualifications and suitability for employment in the federal service. *(Please use reverse of this form if additional space is needed)*

In your opinion, candidate operates best: *(Please check appropriate box)* ☐ Working alone ☐ As a team member

Please check box which indicates your attitude regarding rehiring the candidate *(Complete only if appropriate to your relationship to the candidate)*

☐ Same salary ☐ Lower salary ☐ Higher salary ☐ Would not rehire *(Please explain)*

Signature and title	Telephone number	Date

HANDOUT II-4-10-H5

FEDERAL MERIT PROMOTION POLICY
SUPERVISORS BRIEFING OUTLINE FOR SUBORDINATES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. What the briefing will cover

B. Importance of sound agency promotion programs

1. Substantial number of positions filled by promotion (about 1 out of every 6 employees promoted in FY 1968)

2. Operation of promotion program a key factor in:

a. Determining employee morale

b. Encouraging good employees to stay in the Government

3. Sound promotion program essential for:

a. Effective manpower utilization

b. Proper career development

c. Quality staffing

C. Development of the revised Federal Merit Promotion Policy

1. Old policy not a failure, but could be improved

2. Revised policy developed in consultation with:

a. Agency personnel offices

b. FEB's in Commission regional office cities

c. Employee organizations

3. New features of the policy are intended to help:

a. Management, by improving quality of candidates (see Chart VII)

b. Employees, by assuring appropriate and fair consideration

D. Objectives of the Federal Merit Promotion Policy (see Chart II)

E. Agency responsibilities under the FMPP

1. General

2. Implementation of the revised FMPP

a. Implementation dates

b. Flexibilities available to agencies

c. Relationship of the FMPP, agency promotion guidelines, and merit promotion plans

d. Participation of employees and employee organizations

II. MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE FEDERAL MERIT PROMOTION POLICY

A. Introduction—Material will cover:

1. What major provisions are

2. Why they were adopted

3. What problems agencies may be facing in implementing them

B. Summary of competitive promotion procedures

1. Emphasis on identification of highly qualified candidates and selection from among best qualified

2. Area of consideration

a. Minimum area

b. Extension of area

c. Voluntary applications

d. Concurrent consideration

3. Methods of locating candidates

a. Vacancy announcements

b. Skills files

c. Supervisory referrals

4. Determining basic eligibility

   a. Use of Commission prescribed standards (all who meet standards basically eligible)

   b. Selective placement factors

   c. Written tests

5. Evaluating eligible candidates to identify best qualified

   a. Use of evaluation criteria above minimum qualification requirements

   b. Use of most effective rating methods

      (1) Experience

      (2) Written and performance tests

      (3) Supervisory appraisals

      (4) Awards

      (5) Training, education, and self development

6. Ranking and selection

   a. Minimum and maximum limits on names

   b. Selection from among best qualified

7. General requirements

   a. Furthering equal employment opportunity

   b. Avoiding personal favoritism

   c. Following proper procedural requirements

Special emphasis on supervisory positions

1. Critical role of the supervisor

2. Special plans or provisions for supervisory positions

3. New supervisory qualification standard for GS positions

4. Training of first level supervisors

D. Applicability of competitive promotion procedures

1. Expanded use of competitive procedures

2. Career promotions

3. Exceptions

4. Temporary service at higher grade levels (details and temporary promotions)

E. Relations with employees and employee organizations

1. Participation of employees and employee organizations

2. Keeping employees informed

3. Handling complaints

F. Records and reviews

1. Adequate documentation of promotion actions

2. Retention of records for two years

3. Agency reviews of promotion program

III. ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

A. What CSC will be doing to advise and assist agencies

B. What further issuances CSC will be publishing

C. What CSC will be doing to check on agency implementation

D. What CSC will be doing to enforce new requirements

IV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ERIC Clearinghouse
SEP 12 1972
on Adult Education